lower house of Parliament as per statistics released by Inter-Parliamentary Union;

(b) if so, the details thereof, country-wise;

(c) whether it is a fact that many countries have reserved seats for women even in their lower houses, and

(d) if so, the time frame within which Government will bring forward a suitable legislation to empower women by giving them more seats in Parliament ?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) and (b) The Inter-Parliamentary Union is not an organization of Government of India and is also not based in India. The Government, therefore, cannot authenticate its data in the matter. However the web site of the organization reveals existence of such data and shows India at 110th place as on the 31st March, 2007. The country-wise details in this regard may be seen at website address *http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.*

(c) The Government does not have authentic official data in this regard,which relate to other countries.

(d) Due to the lack of consensus among political parties on the issue of providing reservation for women in legislature in India, it is not possible to indicate any definite time frame.

Clearing of pending cases

4183. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether with a view to clearing huge backlog of court cases, the Centre is considering to set up evening courts;

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, reasons therefor;

(c) the measures proposed to be taken to clear the backlog of cases and speed up disposal of the cases;

(d) whether witnesses retracting their statements and turning hostile are some of the reasons for delay in disposal of the cases and poor rate of conviction even in heinous crimes; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and the measures proposed to be taken to counter this lacunae in law?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) and (b) Under article 235 of the Constitution, administration of justice is a State subject and the State Government in consultation with its concerned High Court decides all matters concerning operations and setting up of courts.

The matter of introduction of shift system in subordinate courts, among other things, was discussed in the Conference of Chief Ministers and Chief Justices of High Courts held in New Delhi on April 8, 2007. In that Conference all States had welcomed the introduction of shift system in subordinate courts and promised to work in that direction. It was decided in that Conference that evening/morning courts be set up, wherever found feasible, and appropriate cases including those involving petty offences be transferred to such courts. Either retired Judicial Officers be re-employed or serving judicial Officers be given suitable incentive, to preside over these Courts. Government has requested the State Governments to take action on the above mentioned decision, as also on the other decisions of the Conference, in consultation with their respective High Courts. The Government has also requested that Chief Justices of the High Courts to take action in consultation with the State Governments.

(c) The Government has taken various steps/measures to improve the productivity and efficiency of the judiciary including periodically monitoring the pendency position in courts, grouping of cases involving common question of law,constitution of specialized benches, timely filling up the vacancies of judges, increasing the judge strength, organizing Lok Adalats at regular intervals, encouraging alternative modes of disputes resolution like negotiation, mediation and arbitration and setting up of special tribunals like Central Administrative Teibunals, State Administrative Tribunals, Income Tax Appellate Tribunals, Family Courts, Labour Courts, etc. The Government has also set up Fast Track Courts in States and has extended their term up to 31.03.2010 for clearing pending cases at District level.

(d) and (e) The Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2006 introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 23rd August, 2006, has among other things, a proposal to prevent the evil of witness turning hostile by amending sections 161, 162 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and also by inserting new sections 164B and 344A in the Code to provide that

(i) statement made to Police relating to offences punishable with improsonment upto ten years be signed and quickly transmitted to the Magistrate (ii) recording of evidence of material witness under oath by Magistrate in all offences punishable with death or imprisonment for 10 years or more (iii) enhanced punishment for perjury.

Setting up of Supreme Court's Bench

4184. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken up with the Supreme Court the matter of establishing a bench of Supreme Court in the South;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) Government's policy in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The matter of setting up of bench of the Supreme Court outside Delhi has been taken up with successive Chief Justices. However, the Chief Justice of India has last conveyed on 16.11.2004 that the matter was discussed in a Full Court meeting of Hon'ble Judges but Full Court did not favour setting up of Benches of the Supreme Court outside Delhi.

(d) A Bench of the Supreme Court outside Delhi can be set up only by carrying out an amendment to the Constitution of India.

Setting up of election fund

4185. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to set up an Election Fund to fund elections;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?